

Thursday 3rd September 2020

Dear Prime Minister

OVERDUE SOCIAL CARE REFORM MUST START WITH PARITY OF RESPECT FOR THE WORKFORCE

We the undersigned - politicians from all parties and none, sector coalitions, trade associations, trade unions, voluntary sector organisations and individual care organisations - believe the Government must seize the opportunity and radically reform the social care sector. The Covid-19 pandemic has shone a harsh light on the sector and revealed a service that does not enjoy the parity of respect with the NHS that it deserves and needs if this country is to care for vulnerable adults and older people in the way it should.

The pandemic has exposed to the public the major challenges faced by those employed in the social care sector. The lack of adequate funding has created an environment where travel time is not always reimbursed and many care workers remain on zero hours contracts. This workforce is predominantly under-valued, despite the fact that they are highly skilled and worthy of being recognised as professionals. We clapped for NHS staff and carers. Now is the time to give them parity of respect with their counterparts in the NHS and, in particular, to move quickly to improve funding for the sector and align pay scales to match their skills.

It is clear to us that the social care sector faces two other chronic problems that interrelate with the workforce issues that beset the sector. These are the lack of integration between social care and the NHS, and long-term underfunding. Whilst we recognise that comprehensive reform of social care will encompass many issues – choice; the importance and value of unpaid carers, volunteers and the third sector; improved inspection; and more – we would urge the Government to make progress on reform *now* based on the following three principles.

A comprehensive social care workforce strategy which delivers greater skills training and professionalism as well as improved pay and conditions. A register for the profession should be introduced and the proportion of those with qualifications should be substantially increased.

A substantial and immediate funding boost for social care which is needed otherwise councils' finances will continue to suffer putting services at risk, staff terms and conditions will not improve and standards of care could worsen. Longer term, a social care funding solution that is equitable and sustainable must be agreed.

Parity of esteem for, and integration of, the social care sector and the NHS to ensure social care can no longer be the 'forgotten frontline' or 'Cinderella' service. Reform should lead to a health and social care service that respects national entitlements and targets but is commissioned and managed locally, recognising the importance of person centred care.

The Government must move forward quickly to meet the public's and the sector's appetite for reform through prioritisation of social care reform in the forthcoming Spending Review and via legislation. If we have a second wave of Covid-19 without the promise of, and some significant movement towards, genuine and immediate reform we fear for the consequences for the most vulnerable in our society in 2021.

SIGNED BY

Rt Hon Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester
Rt Hon Stephen Dorrell, former Secretary of State for Health
Christina McAnea, Assistant General Secretary, Unison
Nadra Ahmed OBE, Executive Chair, National Care Association
Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard, Chair, Academy of Medical Royal Colleges
Caroline Abrahams, Co-chair, Care and Support Alliance
Helen Barnard, Acting Director, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Rt Hon Sir Norman Lamb, former Minister of State for Community and Social Care
Rt Hon Alistair Burt, former Minister of State for Community and Social Care
Phil Hope, former Minister of State for Care Services
Paul Burstow, former Minister of State for Community and Social Care
Edel Harris, Chief Executive Officer, Mencap
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Julia Scott, Chief Executive Officer, Royal College of Occupational Therapists
Deborah Alsina MBE, Chief Executive, Independent Age
Helen Walker, Chief Executive, Carers UK
Chris Simpson, Executive Director, Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust
Lord Bob Kerslake, former head of the Home Civil Service
Alex Fox OBE, Chief Executive, Shared Lives Plus
Dr Rhidian Hughes, Chief Executive, Voluntary Organisations Disability Group
Jon Restell, Chief Executive, Managers in Partnership

CC Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, Secretary of State for Health

Please note a shortened version of this letter was published in the Times today, the 3rd of September. See [thetimes.co.uk/letters](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/letters)